

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAC-00 INRE-00 HA-05  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /078 W  
-----002867 171756Z /46

O R 171724Z MAY 78 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7303

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 994

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, SF, WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: TENTATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SAG PROPOSAL ON  
REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

REF: (A) CAPE TOWN 988, (B) CAPE TOWN 993,

1. PARTICULARLY IN THE ATMOSPHERE CREATED BY THE CASSINGA  
RAID, THE SAG'S PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT ON REGISTRATION OF VOTERS  
IN NAMIBIA (REFTEL A) IF LIKELY TO BE WIDELY SEEN AS ANOTHER  
UNILATERAL STEP BY SOUTH AFRICA PREJUDICIAL TO THE WESTERN  
INITIATIVE. THIS IMPRESSION IS LIKELY TO BE STRONGER IN THE  
ABSENCE OF POSITIVE STEPS BY THE SAG.

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2. NEVERTHELESS, SOUTH AFRICA'S PROPOSED ACTION AT THIS  
POINT IS NOT NECESSARILY A WHOLLY DISCOURAGING ONE OR ENTIRELY  
NEGATIVE. IN THE WORST CASE SCENARIO, THE SAG COULD  
HAVE PRESENTED US WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI AS THEY HAVE  
DONE IN THE PAST. MOREOVER, SOUTH AFRICA COULD HAVE  
DECIDED ON AN ACTION WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR MORE  
DAMAGING THAN REGISTRATION OF VOTERS, SUCH AS ANNOUNCING

A DATE FOR ELECTIONS OR SETTING A DEADLINE FOR SWAPO ACCEPTANCE.

3. THOUGH WE HAVE IN A SENSE BEEN GIVEN A KIND OF DEADLINE WITH RESPECT TO THE PROPOSED STEP, IT SEEMS TO BE A LOOSE ONE. AS VAN HEERDEN SUGGESTED (REF B), IT COULD BE EXTENDED SHOULD THERE BE SOME PROMISE OF MOVEMENT. IF THE SAG PROCEEDS IN TWO WEEKS OR SO WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOTER REGISTRATION, WHILE POSSIBLY DAMAGING, IT COULD CONCEIVABLY BE USEFUL IN UNDERSCORING TO THE AFRICAN STATES THE URGENCY OF MOVING SWAPO TO AN EARLY DECISION BEFORE SOUTH AFRICA SLIPS OFF THE HOOK.

4. AS WE NOTED IN OUR ASSESSMENT FOLLOWING THE MAY 4 RAID (CAPE TOWN 907), SOUTH AFRICA'S INTENTIONS WOULD BE CLARIFIED BY THE TIMING AND NATURE OF ITS NEXT MOVES ON THE POLITICAL FRONT. A CLEARLY PREJUDICIAL STEP IN THE NEAR TERM WOULD HAVE RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SAG'S GOOD FAITH IN HAVING ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL. THE LIMITED NATURE OF THE SAG'S PROPOSED MOVE AND THE FACT THAT SOUTH AFRICA PROVIDED US PRIOR NOTICE SUGGEST THAT THE SAG LEADERSHIP, WHILE PERHAPS HOPING OR BELIEVING SWAPO WILL NEVER COME AROUND, IS NOT SEEKING TO ASSURE AN EARLY FAILURE OF THE INITIATIVE. INSTEAD, THEY GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF HOLDING THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF SWAPO AGREEMENT, ALBEIT FOR A LIMITED TIME AND UNDER FAVORABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE SAG. THERE WOULD SEEM TO

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BE TWO PRIMARY MOTIVATIONS IN THE SAG PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT OF VOTER REGISTRATION: MOLIFICATION OF THOSE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA WHO ARE CALLING FOR MOVEMENT AND THE EXERTION OF PRESSURE ON THE FIVE.

5. OUR IMMEDIATE INCLINATION IS TO PROPOSE THAT OUR RESPONSE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. WE APPRECIATE BEING ADVISED OF THE PROPOSED STEP AND SAG'S WILLINGNESS TO DELAY ANNOUNCEMENT.

B. IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT THE SAG IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE CURRENT UNCERTAINTY AND DELAY, BUT SOUTH AFRICA BROUGHT THE SITUATION ON ITSELF.

C. UNILATERAL ACTION OF THIS KIND DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAS ACTED TO PUT THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SPOT IS UNWELCOME AND HARMFUL TO OUR PROSPECTS.

D. WHILE WE CANNOT PREVENT SOUTH AFRICA FROM TAKING THIS STEP, WE WOULD CONSIDER IT NON-BINDING ON THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE.

E. THE FIVE ARE ACTIVELY PURSUING THEIR INITIATIVE WITH SWAPO  
AND THE FRONT LINE. WE CANNOT YET ESTIMATE THE PROSPECTS,  
BUT IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT SOUTH AFRICA NOT UNDERTAKE ACTIVITY  
WHICH WILL CAUSE FURTHER HESITATION BY THE OTHER INTERESTED  
PARTIES.

F. WHAT IS MOST NEEDED NOW ARE POSITIVE STEPS CONFIRMING  
SOUTH AFRICA'S GOOD FAITH.  
NELSON

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, VOTER REGISTRATION  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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